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Letter dated 1 December 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to submit a factual update to my report of 12 September 2006 on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/780), in particular on the operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and other relevant United Nations activities. In doing so, I have noted and welcome the continuing commitment of the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Israel to all aspects of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

I. Respect for the Blue Line

Since my report of 12 September 2006, the military and security situation in the UNIFIL area of operation has further stabilized. The cessation of hostilities was maintained and there were no serious incidents or confrontations. Nevertheless, UNIFIL observed and reported air violations by Israeli jets and unmanned aerial vehicles on an almost daily basis. On 31 October and again on 16 November, UNIFIL recorded a total of 14 such overflights on each day. A number of these took the form of mock air attacks above the headquarters of the French battalion of UNIFIL located in the general area of Frun. In another instance, two Israeli jets flew within two nautical miles of a French ship that is part of the Interim Maritime Task Force. The Government of Lebanon has protested the overflights as a serious violation of Lebanese sovereignty in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006). Israel, however, maintains that they are not violations but a necessary security measure and its Minister of Defence has linked them to the return of two Israel Defense Force (IDF) soldiers captured by Hizbollah on 12 July and full respect for the arms embargo established in paragraphs 14 and 15 of resolution 1701 (2006). While mindful of the Israeli motivations to continue their air incursions into Lebanese airspace, I would note that such violations of Lebanese sovereignty, which stand in contradiction to resolution 1701 (2006) and other relevant resolutions, undermine the credibility of both UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and compromise overall efforts to stabilize the situation in the south and efforts to build trust and confidence generally.

UNIFIL observed and recorded a number of minor ground violations of the Blue Line by the IDF and Israeli civilian construction workers who were repairing the technical fence and from the Lebanese side by local shepherds. On one occasion Lebanese protesters crossed the Blue Line in the area of the Shab'a Farms, but the LAF, after being notified by UNIFIL, quickly intervened and persuaded them to return to the Lebanese side.

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II. Security arrangements

Israel continued to withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon, in coordination with UNIFIL. The IDF retain a presence only in the northern part of the village of Ghajar. Given the specific status of the village of Ghajar, which is divided by the Blue Line, UNIFIL is working with the LAF and the IDF to finalize the withdrawal of the IDF from the remaining area inside Lebanon and set up temporary security arrangements for the part of the village of Ghajar inside Lebanese territory.

In parallel with the withdrawal of Israeli forces, Lebanon deployed, in coordination with UNIFIL, four brigades of its armed forces throughout the south in the areas vacated by the IDF, including along the Blue Line. The deployment of the LAF throughout the south for the first time in decades down to the Blue Line is a most notable achievement and a key stabilizing factor. The LAF, assisted by UNIFIL, have taken some specific steps to ensure that the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line is free of armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and those of UNIFIL. Specifically, the LAF have established a considerable number of permanent positions and checkpoints and commenced patrols. The LAF have also demonstrated a high degree of cooperation with UNIFIL and have responded promptly to its requests.

The UNIFIL mechanism for liaison and coordination with the LAF and the IDF has been very effective in addressing military and security issues, especially through the periodic meetings of the UNIFIL Force Commander with senior representatives of the LAF and the IDF. This is a key element of UNIFIL efforts to foster stability in southern Lebanon and continues to provide an essential forum for negotiation of matters requiring the cooperation of all three parties, such as the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and temporary security arrangements for the northern part of Ghajar village. UNIFIL is engaged in discussions with the LAF and the IDF on means to further enhance liaison and coordination.

UNIFIL and the LAF have seen sporadic evidence of the presence of unauthorized armed personnel, assets and/or weapons. On one occasion, a UNIFIL demining team was challenged by two Hizbollah personnel in combat uniform carrying AK47 rifles. UNIFIL notified the LAF, who arrested three suspects the following day. Since early September, there have been 13 instances where UNIFIL came across unauthorized arms or related materiel in its area of operation. The two most noteworthy were the discovery of 17 Katyushas and several improvised explosive devices in Rachaya El-Foukhar and, in the general area of Bourhoz, of a weapons cache consisting of seven missiles, three rocket launchers and substantial amounts of ammunition. On all of these occasions, UNIFIL informed the LAF, who took prompt action either to confiscate or destroy the materials. In the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line, there are, in addition, Palestinian armed elements largely confined to the refugee camps.

The Interim Maritime Task Force, under the lead of the Italian Navy, operated in support of the Lebanese Navy to secure Lebanese territorial waters until 15 October, when the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force became operational. The latter has questioned and confirmed the identity of some 950 ships, detecting one suspicious boat, which, when searched, was found to be smuggling cigarettes, and rendering assistance to one vessel in distress. As with the ground forces, cooperation

between the LAF and the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, and the Interim Maritime Task Force before it, has been of a high standard.

The Lebanese authorities reported that they had undertaken a variety of measures to secure their borders and entry points in order to prevent the illegal entry into Lebanon of arms and related materiel. However, the United Nations continues to receive reports of illegal arms smuggling across the Lebanese-Syrian border, but has not been able to verify such reports.

Since my last report, I dispatched a team of border police experts as requested by the Government of Lebanon to review the measures put in place and to assess the need for technical assistance. The team reviewed the security measures and arrangements at Beirut International Airport, seaports in Beirut and Tripoli, and a few smaller ports along the coast, as well as the main land border and entry points between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Significant deficiencies were found in equipment and in training and in coordination among the four different government services responsible for the borders, as well as in compliance with some basic border security standards. The team was, however, able to confirm that the Lebanese authorities had taken initial steps to improve border security and control, including most notably the implementation of an effective integrated approach to security at the airport. I also note the presence of some 8,000 LAF troops all along Lebanon's land border with the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Government has instructed the head of the Internal Security Forces to establish a committee to review the systems in place at all border entry points and make recommendations for their improvement. That committee's preliminary findings and recommendations conform in most respects to those of the United Nations assessment team. After analysing the findings of the assessment team, the United Nations will share its observations with the Government of Lebanon. It is my understanding that the Government is also awaiting further recommendations from a German team of experts, which has been providing technical advice and assistance to the Lebanese authorities on a bilateral basis.

It is plain, however, that there is a need for bilateral assistance to the Government in order to enhance its border security capabilities. I would request that further specialized equipment and technical know-how, which has been requested by the Government of Lebanon, be provided. The provision of such assistance would be a useful confidence-building measure.

III. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Following the decision of the Security Council to supplement and enhance the UNIFIL force in numbers, equipment, mandate and scope of operations, a phased deployment was planned and has largely been implemented in the area of operation between the Litani River and the Blue Line.

The first phase involved a rapid response deployment, reinforcing UNIFIL troops on the ground for the purpose of stabilizing the security situation and facilitating the withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon and the concomitant deployment of the LAF throughout the south. Battalions from France, Italy and Spain deployed into the area of operation by 15 September, joining the battalions already in place from Ghana and India, and increased the overall strength of UNIFIL

to over 5,000. Italy and Spain each deployed marine infantry units to facilitate this early entry, which were later relieved in place with regular army units. Upon the completion of the first phase in mid-October, five battalions were fully deployed and operational. In addition, France has deployed one engineer unit and Belgium and Luxembourg have deployed a level-2 hospital and an engineering unit. Italian air resources were strengthened with the deployment of a UH1 helicopter, bringing the total number of helicopters to five.

The support requirement placed on the limited resources of UNIFIL has been exacerbated by the rapid flow of deployment into the area of operation and the difficulties associated with the acquisition of land, which is the responsibility of the host Government, to accommodate the incoming troops.

Responsibility for maritime operations was handed over to the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force on 15 October, under the operational control of the UNIFIL Force Commander. The Task Force consists of four frigates, 10 corvettes/fast patrol boats supported by organic helicopters and two logistics support ships with hospital facilities.

The second phase of the augmentation of UNIFIL is now under way, and involves the further deployment of four mechanized infantry battalions from France, Indonesia, Italy and Nepal and one infantry unit each from Malaysia and Qatar. The French composite battalion is assuming the role of quick reaction force. Finland, Ireland and Turkey have deployed engineer units and another is expected from Portugal. China will deploy one level-2 hospital, in addition to its existing engineering company. The Dominican Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania are expected to deploy military police companies.

As at 28 November, UNIFIL troop strength was 10,480 all ranks (see annex). The completion of the augmentation is expected by 7 December, when UNIFIL force strength will reach approximately 11,500 ground troops, 1,750 naval personnel and 51 military observers from the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. With the deployment by the LAF of four brigades to south Lebanon, these numbers are deemed to be sufficient to execute the mandate.

The regular UNIFIL supply chain was recently re-established, thus enabling the Force to discontinue the air/sea bridge between Cyprus and Lebanon, which had been in place to maintain UNIFIL operability during the IDF naval and air blockade.

Structure

Command of UNIFIL in the field is exercised by the Force Commander, who is also head of the mission. My intention is to assign to the Deputy Force Commander the additional function of deputy head of the mission as a United Nations staff member. The Chief of Staff will assist the Force Commander in planning and controlling the conduct and employment of all military components. Two sector headquarters, West and East, have been established in Tibnin and Marjayoun, respectively. Each of the sectors is commanded by a brigadier general and will consist of four mechanized infantry battalions and a signal company. In addition, a quick reaction force will be based in Frun. UNIFIL air assets, provided and operated by Italy, are based at the Force headquarters. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force is operating in Lebanese territorial waters. UNIFIL will have six engineering units, as well as two level-2 hospitals and one level-1 hospital. A

UNIFIL office for coordination and joint planning with the LAF, the Ministry of Defence and other relevant Lebanese authorities is being set up in Beirut.

Another UNIFIL office will be established in Tel Aviv for liaison and coordination with IDF headquarters, the Ministry of Defence and other relevant Israeli authorities. A UNIFIL liaison office, based in the IDF Northern Command, is fully operational. The Office of Political Affairs, comprising also civil affairs and public information, is being augmented within the Force headquarters and will staff the liaison offices and also deploy at the sector level. The Strategic Military Cell for UNIFIL has been established at United Nations Headquarters and is operational.

The administrative and logistics component is being significantly reinforced in order to provide adequate and sufficient support to the Force. Troop-contributing countries were requested to deploy on a self-sufficiency basis for periods of from 15 to 60 days. Significant resources will continue to be required in the areas of engineering, transport and movement control, communications, supply and medical and administrative support.

Financial aspects

By its resolution 60/278 of 30 June 2006, the General Assembly appropriated to the Special Account for UNIFIL the amount of $93.5 million gross, equivalent to $7.8 million per month, for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), concurrence was granted by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to enter into commitments not to exceed $50 million to meet the most immediate and essential requirements for the expansion of UNIFIL following the recent hostilities in July and August 2006. In addition, the Advisory Committee has been informed that the UNIFIL appropriation for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 as approved by the Assembly in its resolution 60/278, will be used flexibly to meet the requirements of the expanded UNIFIL.

Pending submission of the detailed budget for the expansion of UNIFIL for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007, a request for commitment authority will be submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration during the regular part of its sixty-first session. The detailed budget for that period for the expanded UNIFIL will be submitted for consideration by the Assembly during its first resumed session, in March 2007.

IV. Other issues

Captured soldiers and prisoners

I continue to make the unconditional release of the captured Israeli soldiers and the issue of the Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel a top priority. The facilitator appointed by me specifically to address these vital issues is currently engaged in an intensive effort with all parties to reach a resolution.

I underline my firm expectation that the necessary degree of respect for the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) and compassion for the fate of the victims will prevail. I consider it a basic moral obligation for at least humanitarian gestures to be made with the shortest delay possible.

Landmines and cluster bombs

Since my last report, the full scope of contamination from unexploded cluster munitions has come to light. As at 20 November, the National Demining Office, the LAF and the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre South Lebanon have recorded 822 cluster bomb strike sites, an 80 per cent increase since I last reported. Civilian casualties have increased to 152 as at 24 November. Of those 152 civilian victims, 17 were killed and 135 injured. The joint efforts of the teams working under the Mine Action Coordination Centre, the LAF engineering units and the UNIFIL troops have resulted to date in the clearance of more than 60,000 cluster bomblets.

Israel has yet to provide UNIFIL with the detailed firing data on its use of cluster munitions that I referred to in my previous report. The provision of this data, which would be in keeping with the spirit of Protocol V of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, which came into force recently, would significantly assist operators on the ground to mitigate the threat to innocent civilians. I reiterate my expectation for the provision of these data.

I would note that Israel confirmed in a letter dated 14 November 2006 from its Chargé d'Affaires that it had handed over to the United Nations all pre-2000 minefield records available for southern Lebanon and the area north of the Litani River.

However, I regret to inform you that four deminers working for the United Nations mine clearance programme in south Lebanon have been injured over the past few days, after they stepped on Israeli-manufactured anti-personnel mines near the village of Deir Mimas. As this area was considered safe prior to the conflict, there is the possibility that new anti-personnel landmines were laid during the recent conflict. While investigations on those incidents are still ongoing, I want to reiterate that the United Nations condemns the use of all anti-personnel mines and calls upon any party that laid such mines during the recent conflict to provide information as to where they have been laid to prevent similar tragic incidents occurring in the future.

Delineation of borders

Further to the Council's request to me in paragraph 10 of its resolution 1701 (2006) to develop proposals for delineation of the international borders of Lebanon, especially in those areas where the border was disputed or uncertain, including by dealing with the Shab'a Farms area, I have appointed a senior cartographer to assume the lead on reviewing relevant material and developing an accurate territorial definition of the Shab'a Farms area. The cartographer is in the process of conducting such an exercise for the purpose of any further diplomatic activity that could be carried out by the United Nations as regards this issue. I am heartened to note that both Lebanon and Israel have indicated their readiness to cooperate in this exercise.

A permanent solution of this issue remains contingent upon the delineation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in fulfilment of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). At the same time, and in view of the repeated Syrian statements indicating that the Shab'a Farms area is

Lebanese. I continue to take careful note of the alternative path suggested by the Government of Lebanon in its seven-point plan, namely, placing the Shab'a Farms under United Nations jurisdiction until permanent border delineation and Lebanese sovereignty over them is settled. The United Nations looks forward to reporting further on this matter in early 2007.

I should be grateful if you would bring this information to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. **Annan**

Annex

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon: countries providing military ground and naval contingents, as at 28 November 2006

Country	Ground	Naval	Total
Belgium	368	—	368
Bulgaria	—	130	130
China	190	—	190
Denmark	—	80	80
Finland	203	—	203
France	1 608	—	1 608
Germany	—	1 113	1 113
Ghana	661	—	661
Greece	—	225	225
India	670	—	670
Indonesia	360	—	360
Ireland	163	—	163
Italy	2 068	—	2 068
Luxembourg	2	—	2
Nepal	226	—	226
Norway	—	134	134
Poland	321	—	321
Portugal	143	—	143
Spain	1 290	—	1 290
Sweden	—	41	41
Turkey	262	232	494
Total	**8 535**	**1 955**	**10 490**